

The Immigration Peril

I. "AMERICANIZATION" A FAILURE

The Question Now is, "Shall the Aliens be Allowed to 'Alienize' America?" The Menace to American Ideals in Government, Religion, Education, and Social Customs. The Mass Resistance of Immigrant Blocs to the Acceptance of These American Ideals. Their Mass Aggressiveness in Demanding That America Shall Accept Foreign Ideals, and Thereby Become a Mongrelized Civilization

BY GINO SPERANZA

UP IN New Hampshire, where the foothills of the great mountains go to meet the Connecticut, there is a long ledge of green pastures. At one end, within a stone enclosure, some old evergreens shade a dozen tombstones, thickly lichened but upstanding despite their age. In the centre of this little company of the dead rises a simple shaft with the inscription:



forged the American democracy. Such as he gave its breadth and vision, and shaped its special national genius.

It has been the fashion in the last years to speak of America as a potential but undefined mass "still in the making." As if the American democracy had no particular characteristics except a fanciful and limitless power of absorbing all kinds and conditions of men, and every degree and character of civilization!

Indeed, a good deal of popular discussion has assumed that, because there is no theoretically pure race, it makes little difference how impure it is; or which stock in a mixed population is "numerically greater and intellectually dominant."

In line with such crude discussion of biologic and ethnic questions there has been produced a body of writings on "immigrant America," fantastic as history and specious as philosophy. These writings have blurred, in the mind of even some thoughtful Ameri-

Caleb Kendall,
Born at Preston, Conn.
Dec. 2, 1732.

Settled in Fairfield,
N. H. in 1764,
Was the First Proprietor
of a Farm in the
County.

A Soldier in the
Revolution
he fought at Fort
Ticonderoga, in 1776.

A successful Hunter &
a good Neighbor,
He enclosed this Acre
and dedicated it to
God.
Died October 2, 1821,
aged 89 years.

This brief recital
of a life's service
grippingly brings us
face to face with
the character and
manhood which



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A BULGARIAN
PEASANT WOMAN



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A LEMONADE VENDOR
OF CONSTANTINOPLE

cans, the essential fundamentals of their national civilization.

Thus, for many persons to-day, American history has ceased to be the history of a distinct people and of a distinct civilization. And because America, as a virgin and practically uninhabited continent, had to be settled by outsiders, it has become the easy play of rhetoricians to call the United States an "immigrant nation." By the same reasoning, the American democracy is a "composite experiment," still in the formative period.

These persons ignorantly or wilfully overlook that this Nation, in all the essentials of its life and character, was grafted upon a historically definite and distinguishable north-European or Anglo-Saxon stock. They forget that upon that graft there was developed a definite and distinguishable racial type—the historic American people. This racial type varies from Lowell's Yankee (with his "mystic practicalism, his cast-iron enthusiasm, his sour-faced humor and close-fisted generosity," who "invented new trades as well as new tools . . . and got education at all risks") to the very flower of manhood, as in "the idealism limited and checked by the possible" of an Abraham Lincoln, "who saw with sympathy and interpreted with common-sense."

No one denies that there were men of vari-

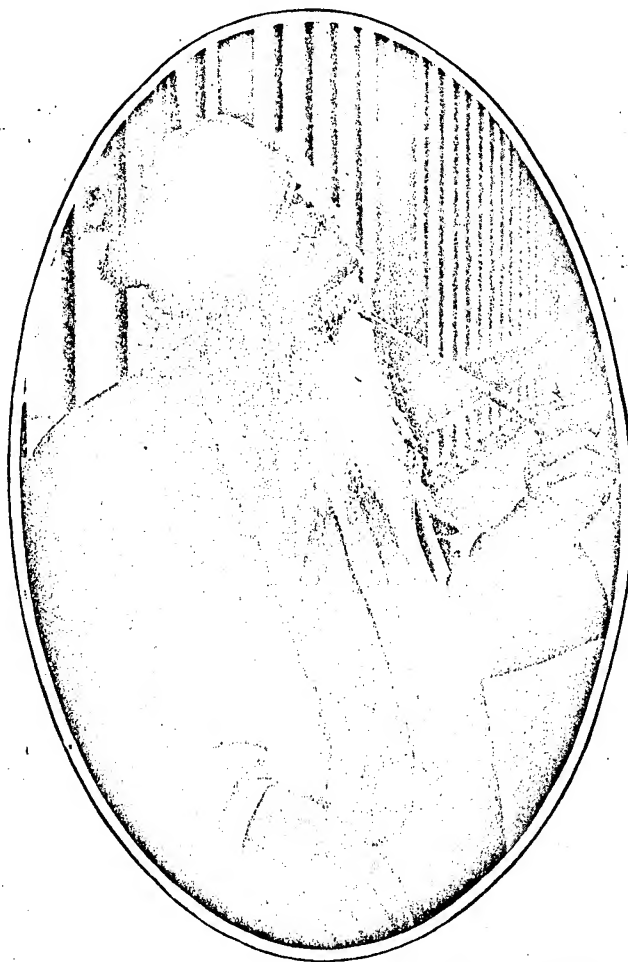
ous races in the founding of this country, or that immigrants from every part of the earth have contributed to the development of the American Continent. Just so no one denies that peoples other than Greeks contributed to the upbuilding of Hellenic civilization. But in the case of America, what shaped its distinct civilization, what gave it its special

character and genius, was the labor and thought of men steeped in the Anglo-Saxon spirit. Through their kinship in spiritual and cultural traditions and antecedents, and the ennobling conditions of life and struggle in the new continent, they became a homogeneous people—the historic American stock—distinctly like-minded and peculiarly alike also in character, in outlook, and in ideals.

That is why George Washington (whom I hope even the ultra-modernists will not challenge as a good judge of Americans), in defining his fellow citizens, did not dwell on the fact of birthplace (and in his time he could hardly do so), but stressed this essential and funda-

mental similarity of mind and character of his people. In that noblest of his addresses, delivered on a most solemn occasion, he said:

"Citizens by birth or choice, of a common country, that country has a right to concentrate your affection. . . . *With slight shades of difference, you have the same religion, manners, habits, and political principles.*"



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A TYPICAL NATIVE OF CAPRI, ITALY

The immigrants from Southern Europe are those whose background is such that it is difficult for them to acquire or even genuinely to accept the fundamentals of our government and our society

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I have italicized certain words in this extract from the Farewell Address because their great and profound significance has been too often overlooked. Washington knew, as we know, that there were Atheists, Jews, and even Catholics among those fellow citizens among his personal friends. He knew that there were men also whose manners and customs were too far from the American standard at variance with the American ideal. But this did not prevent him from, or make him swerve from, the essential fact that the moral and cultural basis of the Americanism for which he spoke rested on certain definite and definite similarities in the great body of the people.

This basis of the democracy which Washington fathered was, on the side of character and conduct (that is, the relation of man to man) distinctly Anglo-Saxon; on the side of religion (that is, the relation of man to God) it was distinctly Christian and specifically Protestant.

If I stress, as I shall stress, the fundamentally Anglo-Saxon and Protestant character

of American civilization, it is because it rests, historically and philosophically, on the principles of *Self-Government—self-government in all things, political, moral, and industrial*. It is distinctly this Anglo-Saxon and Protestant character which makes government of and by the people applicable not only to the American State but to the American

home, to the American church, and to American industrial life: "In the home it means equality of husband and wife; in the church it means the voice of the laity; in industry it means the participation of the worker."

This does not mean that there is no room within the Republic for peoples whose views, beliefs, and antecedents differ from those of

the historic American stock. It does mean that when, by the sheer weight of numbers, these peoples bear down too heavily with their alienage upon the structure of the democracy, they become a distinctly de-nationalizing element within the Republic. It does mean that when, by combining and solidifying their unlikenesses and divergences from the American civilization, they attempt to impose their dissentient social and political ideas, ideals, and habits, they become a distinctly de-nationalizing element within the Republic. They are then a political and cultural disturbing factor akin to those racial minorities which have threatened,



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AN ITALIAN LEMON WOMAN

While Italians and other southern and southeastern Europeans find it difficult to become wholeheartedly American, it is less difficult for those peoples who inhabit Northern Europe, for it is upon Nordic foundations that America is built

and to-day still threaten, the life and peace of some of the states of Europe.

We therefore hold these truths to be self-evident:

1. That American civilization, both in its culture and its character, has its roots in Anglo-Saxon soil;
2. That such culture and character de-

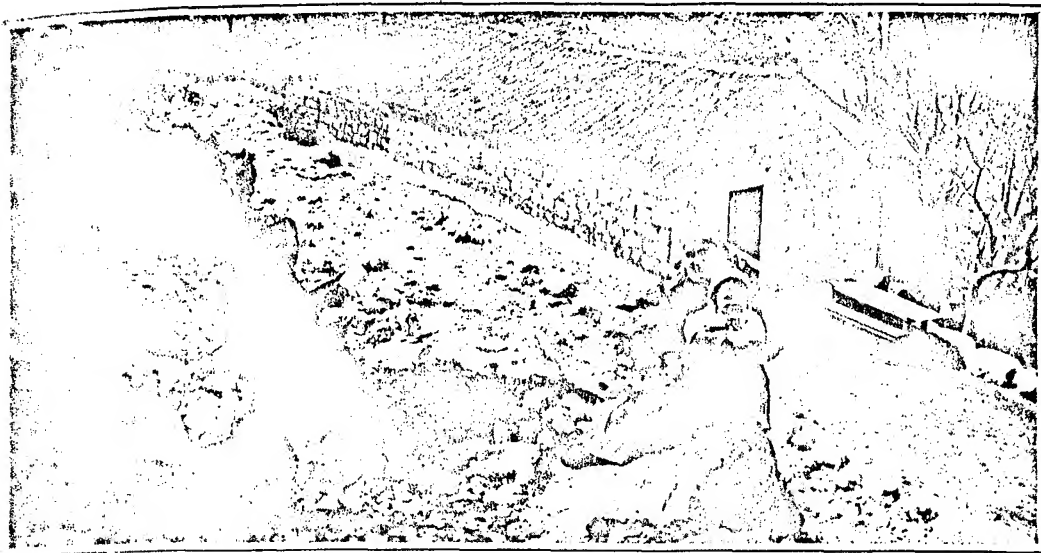
3. That this American democracy is not merely a form of government, but primarily and fundamentally a society and a spiritual community—"a community so closely knit together by sentiment, by tradition, by interest, and by aspiration, that it is a psychological organism possessed of a corporate personality, a single consciousness, a common conscience, a general will";

Even with such original unity, however, it was no small undertaking to preserve it in such a rapidly expanding empire as the United States. It needed the *will*, as well as the single consciousness, to preserve the racial and cultural characteristics of the Founders. Extraneous influences such as we see operating in the democracy to-day might well have materially impeded the nationalizing process. Fortunately, the likeness of mind and character of the Founders was perpetuated in the frontier spirit of the Middle and the Far West. Nevertheless, at best, the making of the Nation in its completeness required a constantly operative racial purpose. Even in the most easily achievable of social likenesses—the homogeneity of *political* thought and practice—it took one hundred years of national experience and a bloody war between only slightly different-minded peoples to attain that political unity by which only was it possible that “the Union must and shall be preserved.”

It came to pass, however, that extraneous and distintegrating influences developed in acute form. They disturbed those older forces which were making for the perpetuation of the Nation's homogeneity. Immigration from foreign lands gradually expanded into such vastness of numbers that nothing in recorded history short of a race invasion equalled it. This immigration became appallingly diversified in racial characteristics,

Thus, constitutional and legislative provisions (which contemplated and were applicable to the gradual and reasonable absorption of individual aliens into the body-politic) were stretched far beyond their spirit and purpose, to induct hordes from all kinds of races and countries into the management of the great American political enterprise. The effect of mass, so obvious and impressive in Nature, was not considered at all in its workings and consequences upon a distinct civilization and political system developed by a homogeneous people. If ten thousand north-Europeans in a year were a helpful addition to a growing country, why could not a million a year of aliens from every part of the globe be an advantage?

And what of the harvest? Washington observed "slight shades of difference" in the "manners, habits, and political principle," in the American people of his day. But to-day we see huge masses of non-American minded individuals, living in colonies or ghettos; or even cities and counties of their own. Here they perpetuate their racial mindedness, their racial character, and their racial habits. Here they speak their own tongue, read their own newspapers, maintain their separate educational system. In 1920 out of a white population of about 95,000,000 nearly 14,000,000 were born in forty-five different foreign countries and 23,000,000 more were of foreign or half-foreign parentage. These 14,000,000 foreign-born, as part of more than 34,000,000 of aliens officially admitted into the United States from all countries since 1820, are supporting and reading *one thousand and fifty-two* papers in more than *thirty different languages* varying from Arabic to Yiddish, from Albanian to Welsh. Add to the number of these people, who get their news and views from the foreign language press, the million and three quarters of illiterates among the 14,000,000 foreign-born under the 1920 census, and you will get a glimpse of how far we have strayed from Washington's democratic homogeneity in manners and habits of life.



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WOMEN OF JUGO-SLAVIA

Slavs are so different in ideals and background from the people who founded America that it is all but impossible for us to assimilate them in large numbers

But if such statistical summaries seem too detached from life in their mathematical preciseness, go and see the actual and visible phenomena *in loco*. You will find that in a single block in New York City eighteen different languages are spoken and that one public school in that city harbors children of twenty-four different nationalities. In the City of Newark, N. J., only 29 per cent. of the white children in the schools are of fathers born in the United States; that is, in a school enrollment of 71,537 only 20,898 of the white children have fathers who were born here. Of the others, 19,817 have fathers born in Italy, 10,441 are the children of Lithuanian, Estonian, Lett, and Russian fathers, while 4,268, 2,390, and 1,234 are, respectively, Austrian, West and South Slavic, German, Polish, and Hungarian parenthood. In school Newport, R. I., you will find a large group of Greeks, mostly from the Island of Rhodes, whose local "king" can boast of unchallenged allegiance also of the Xantians in the large Greek colony at Tarpon Springs, Fla. In New Bedford, Mass., virtually half of its present population was born in foreign lands, with more than half of such population having its origin in non-English-speaking countries. This old, historic New England town to-day leads every other city of 100,000 inhabitants and over, in the shameful record of illiteracy with a

percentage of 12:1 among persons ten years of age and over.

Nor are the de-nationalizing forces of alienage operative only in the large cities, as we can see by a few examples. The little town of Ghent, Minn., is predominantly Belgian. Such alien inhabitants are, as a local teacher reports, almost absolutely illiterate, they speak no language but their own, and bear children who grow up wholly ignorant of English.

Another teacher, writing from northern New York, says: "This district is rural and comprises a population that is 90 per cent. Finnish."

In Crawford County, Kansas, there have been as many as 30,000 foreign-born miners distributed through 36 districts in 42 different camps and small towns.

The school principal at Phipps, Mont., reports: "Our community is nearly all foreign-born with many radical ideas."

Another teacher, writing from Selby, S. D., says: "The great big drawback is that nearly all the elder folks in this country speak only German and do not understand English at all."

Yukon, Pa., in 1922 had more than 75 per cent. of aliens in its total population, and there are small towns both in that state and elsewhere where nearly every local public office—from mayor to constable—is held by

foreign-born "Americans" or their immediate descendants.

A local survey made by the Women's Bureau of Passaic, N. J., showed that 40 per cent., of the total female population of that city were foreign-born. Among the women who were bread winners, the percentage was nearly 60 per cent. Of these foreign-born female workers, one fourth were Poles and the rest Hungarian, Italian, Russian, Czech, Dutch, German, and other nationalities. Forty per cent. of such foreign-born female bread winners did not speak English, although only 73 of the 5,701 were recent immigrants and approximately two thirds had been here ten years or more.

In the progressive state of Michigan, one school principal writes that in his small, rural jurisdiction, of 306 children enrolled only 97 speak English at home.

A few months ago the Milwaukee (Wisconsin) *Journal* quoted with approval in reference to its own state, from a leading magazine that "it is not hard to find communities in this country in which the English language is to the inhabitants a foreign tongue and in which habits of thought and conduct are widely variant from those of neighboring communities."

Nor will it do to argue that such de-Americanizing variances apply only to recent immigrant groupings, or are due to a failure of direct contacts with the life and the people of the Nation. Insuperable ethnic and cultural barriers stand in the way. They stare at you tragically in the case of the Negro race, which after fifty years of freedom has been unavoidably segregated both physically and culturally. They stare at you threateningly in the case of the yellow race in every state of the Union where individuals of that race gather in sufficient numbers. They are vividly present in the case of even the white race in the Southwest, where the man in the street, with a certain rough sense of ethnic realities cannot call his fellow citizens of Mexican stock "Americans," although American civilization and American self-government have been operating upon such "fellow-citizens" for more than seventy-five years.

And what of the variances in these forces which make for the life of the spirit? How near are we to-day to the "slight shades of difference" in the religious and moral life of Washington's American people? The last

U. S. Religious Census (which is by no means inclusive) lists two hundred and two different denominations of which *one hundred and thirty-two* report that a part or all of their organizations use a foreign language. And the languages number at least *forty-two*, some of them as closely related to the English as the King James's version of the Bible as Chinese of our Chinese Buddhists, the Yiddish of our Polish Jews, or the Magyar of Hungarian Catholics.

Slight shades of difference! During years of "liberal" policy, enough Jews passed through Ellis Island to outnumber all communicants of Protestant churches Greater New York. A Jewish publication estimates that of all the Jews in the world one in every ten resides in New York City. The total Jewish population of New York exceeds "that of all the countries of Western Europe together with the countries of South America, Canada, and Palestine combined."

The Album of the Parish of St. Stanislaus Kostka in Chicago (the largest Roman Catholic Polish parish in America) describes one of its parochial institutions—the Young Men's Club of St. Stanislaus—as a society whose members are expected "to be the guardians of everything that is divine and Polish in order to keep up to be real Polish patriots and defenders of the Christian faith."

And up in New England—the cradle of Puritan and the Yankee—there are to-day more than one million French Canadians who are carrying on a struggle for the perpetuation of their culture along the same line as the French in Canada. As a consequence New England mill towns have the French language, French parishes and parochial schools, French nationalistic societies, and French nationalist press."

I have pointed out how, the closer the likeness of mind and character of its people, the better will the American democratic function. The converse is equally true. That is, the greater the divergences and differences from the historic homogeneity of the American people, the greater the strain upon American civilization. *It is when American people are forced to resist the operation and effects of such variations, as they come down more and more heavily upon the culture, and ideals of America, that they come aware of their grave internal problems.*

These differentiating elements, more

large accretions in their number, and more and more to cohere. Hence the consciousness that has developed among the Irish in America, the Poles in America, the Germans and Italians in America. They not only become more difficult of absorption because of their increasing bulk, but solidify their differences, and thereby

obstruct and resist the process of absorption. Thus, for example, exactly as the Polish immigrants are an undigested mass in this country, their sense of alienage impels them to dwell upon their own characteristics, and to become more consciously Polish than they were in Poland. This self-consciousness takes form in an intensification of their culture, which they seek to conserve by supporting newspapers and magazines in the Polish language and by maintaining Catholic churches which conduct their services in the language of Poland. They thus become, not a passive body within the American organism, but an active mass undermining the living tissue of such organism.

Furthermore, these differentiating elements gain momentum from their own expanding volume and strength. The rise of the "Irish vote" in New York City is a case in point. It is a humility that was almost abject, years ago when Jews were few in number and weak in leadership; they have developed to a point where they are the most self-assertive element in the political life of the city, dictating terms to the Irish leaders—who, indeed, are an early example of the same process.

Accelerated by this "momentum of expanding mass," these differentiating immigrant elements become more and more aggressive

in their resistance to absorption, until they gradually reach a point where they actually attempt to impose *their* views and *their* principles and *their* interpretations and *their* standards upon the historic American majority. Thus the Jews, for example, have led the movement to exclude the Bible from the public schools—an historic and fundamental

text book of Anglo-Saxon education—and they have been aided in this by the Catholic elements of our alien population, notably the Irish and the Poles.

Some of these attempts to impose alien standards upon the Old Stock majority have been honest enough, and have even been made in the name of American democracy. But they have been made in ignorance, or through racial incapacity to understand and participate in American civilization. But many are made dishonestly, and for their own racial ends. Thus the exploitation of American principles, ideals, and institutions by certain alien-minded politicians in New York City, who loudly apply the letter and secretly betray the spirit, is a conscious misuse of sacred American symbols for selfish personal gain.

Under this alienage and exploitation, when it has become solidified and aggressive, what had seemed a problem of fine adjustments between dissimilar elements in the *life-corporeal* of the Nation, becomes distinctly a struggle

between opposing forces in the *life-spiritual* of the Democracy. The problem ceases to be, "How can we get along with these strangers?" It becomes, "Are not these strangers about to swallow us up?" It is no longer, "How can we Americanize the aliens?" It becomes, "Are not the aliens alienizing America?"



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A MODERN ATHENIAN

Greeks in America are usually noticeably Greek. Many of them are bootblacks, many others become keepers of fruit stands and candy shops, but in proportion to their numbers few of them become sound American citizens because they can accept our viewpoint only with "reservations"

At this point, the historic American majority, forced into an awareness that the very fundamentals of its life and culture are threatened, begins to react. *It wishes to hold its own normally and by due process of law if it can. But hold its own it will; and it will do so violently and extra-legally if it must.*



The Old Stock in America to-day is permeated with restlessness and foreboding. The Ku Klux Klan is a symptom. Old Stock Americans everywhere are talking among themselves about what is wrong with the country. Dimly they are coming to believe wild stories—doubtless untrue in themselves, but true enough in the larger facts they represent. They are coming to believe that the Jews dominate the economic life of the country. They are coming to believe that the Catholics aim to dominate its political life. They are coming to believe that alien-immigration is at the root of an attack upon all religion, on the one hand, and upon Protestant freedom of conscience on the other. An absurd tale that a great building now in process of erection in Washington is in preparation for the transfer of the residence of the Pope from the Vatican to our National Capitol, is very widely believed.

In detail, these beliefs are wrong. Many of them are mistaken, even if they are accepted only as symbols of larger truths. But *something* is wrong. And the American people *know* something is wrong. And, broadly speaking, they are right in laying their apprehensions at the door of the alien. The alien is not consciously engaged in petty plots against religion or government. But both consciously (in small numbers) and unconsciously (in huge masses) he is engaged in a movement far more subtle and far more dangerous. He is engaged in an elemental



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NATIVES OF SICILY

Sicilians and Southern Italians have come in large numbers to the United States, but many—perhaps most—come with the idea of making a "fortune" here and of returning to their old homes to live in comfort

struggle to remain alien. And he is engaged in an elemental struggle to make America alien.

It is the dim realization of this fact that makes the historic American majority restless and unhappy. As the realization becomes less dim; as it becomes clearer to its understanding, the majority is itself becoming more racially conscious. It, too, stiffening its will to meet the challenge of other races and other cultures for supremacy. Its mood is still conciliatory. But it is tending to become more grim. It will

if other means of defense fail, become violent.

This is the situation to-day which should be faced quietly, honestly, and courageously before it gets out of hand. What Lord Charmwood in his "Lincoln" described as the larger aspect of the struggle between North and South for the maintenance of the political union of the Nation, may be said to be the growing conflict of to-day for the preservation of the spiritual union of the democracy. Now, as then, there is "vividly present to the mind of some few," and "vaguely but honestly present to the mind of a great multitude," the stirring sense that if the Government of the United States—"the first and most famous attempt in a great modern country to secure government by the will of a majority of the people"—were found to be at the mercy "of a powerful minority," what they had learned to think "the most powerful agency for the uplifting of man everywhere would, for ages to come, 'have proved a failure.'"

It is the activities and the tendencies of these New Stock minorities that we must study in their organized solidarity and in the mass aggressiveness, both conscious and unconscious. Obviously in such an inquiry it will be necessary to lay aside what an Amer-

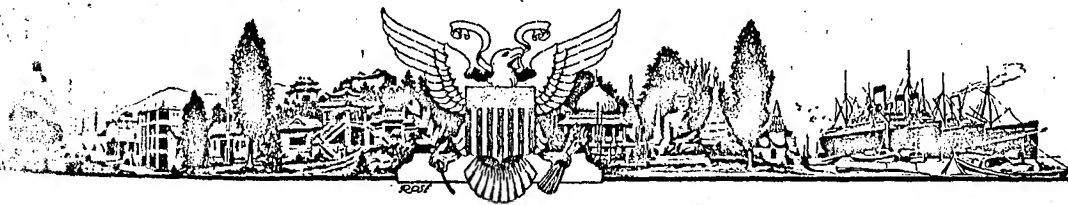
the president has called "the characteristic unwillingness of Americans to discuss the subject with the disputed and the disagreeable." We shall have to face the fact, for instance, that there is a growing race consciousness in the American people; and we shall have to study its genesis and the causes of its more recent development. We may not do it (as some of the New Stock advocates would have us do) by calling it "prejudice," which is an entirely different thing. We shall also have to face the fact that the immigration problem bulks larger and larger as a race problem. And we must recognize that the essential danger in the race issue, lies in the fact that we have used these heterogeneous non-American races with a political weapon which many of them are congenitally unfit to use, and clothed with them by legislative fiat with an "equality" which flies in the face of Nature and their history.

Let me add that in my youth I hoped for the possibility of the absorption of racial groups under the assimilative process of American democratic forces; not a synthetic Americanism, but the original spirit and power of your race nourished, as it were, but enriched, by new and fresh blood. Long observation, and thought have wholly changed my views. The effect of mass for instance, in the immigration of the last fifty years especially, is such as to overcome the assimilative forces of even a younger and less distinctly defined society than the United States. Then it has become more and more clear to me that racial characteristics do not die, especially those subtler qualities of mind and character which profoundly differentiate the culture and the spirit of one people from those of another. These racial characteristics are transmitted from generation to generation practically unchanged, though they may lie dormant for long periods

or lives, or manifest themselves obscurely or only under the stress of a conflict of racial ideals. Add to this the almost abysmal ethnic, cultural, and historic differences from the American stock in some of the elements of the newer immigration. And consider that the easy and rapid means of international communication to-day powerfully tend to keep the alien under the influences of his original civilization. Considering all these things, the possibility of even an approximation to real national absorption is nullified.

That all this is coming to be more and more recognized can hardly be challenged. It is evidenced on the one hand, by an increasing unrest in certain parts of the land and a growing demand for more drastic restrictive and protective measures. It is evidenced on the other hand, by a tendency in certain New Stock "intellectuals," aided and abetted by "internationally minded" Americans, to theorize about a future amalgamated or mongrelized Americanism. Some of these look forward with satisfaction to a "Synthetic America" or a Federated United States composed of racial groups living side by side as the English and the French in Canada. Others among them, like one of the writers of the Carnegie Foundation, actually exult at the thought that "each of the races that we now know on this soil" (and he includes the yellow and brown races) "will have its share of 'ancestral responsibility' for the typical American now in the making."

I, for one, am against all these. I am not, even remotely, of Anglo-Saxon or Nordic stock. But this is my Country. And the test of service and devotion for the New Stock may be, after all, not how much we give of ourselves, but how much of ourselves we deny. The task and the call of us all—Old Stock and New—as I vision it, is to strive to keep America as it was, and, as I pray with all my mind and heart, it may ever be.



A second article by Mr. Speranza on the Immigration Peril will appear in the WORLD'S WORK for December